



the poetical life of  
**PHILOMENA  
McGUINNESS**

An Irish Nurse in World War II

**PRODUCTION  
PACK**



# The Show

**The Poetical Life of Philomena McGuinness:** A one-woman play inspired by the true stories of Irish nurses during World War Two.

It's 1939 and Philomena McGuinness, a reluctant nurse, is on her way from Dublin to London. Newly recruited for the British war effort, she finds herself facing the challenge of a lifetime. But it is not the blood, the bombs, or even the wise-cracking soldiers that make her question her place here. It's the fact that she is not just a nurse, but a poet too. Can one live a life true to the poetry inside them when they are constantly being defined by their role in the war?



- The production is new writing, written specifically to bridge the gap between younger and older audiences.
- It is both poignant and comedic, performed by Comedy Store-regular comedian, Jasmin Gleeson, and based on the true stories of Irish nurses during the war.
- It is intimate, engaging and at times interactive theatre, with Philomena addressing, questioning and joking with the audience directly. They share her space and her experience.
- It is technically adaptable, with very limited playing space and minimal set and tech required.

# Possible Room Layout/Tech Info

## Set

1x foldable desk

1x stool

(All provided by us)

## Props

1x suitcase

1x apple

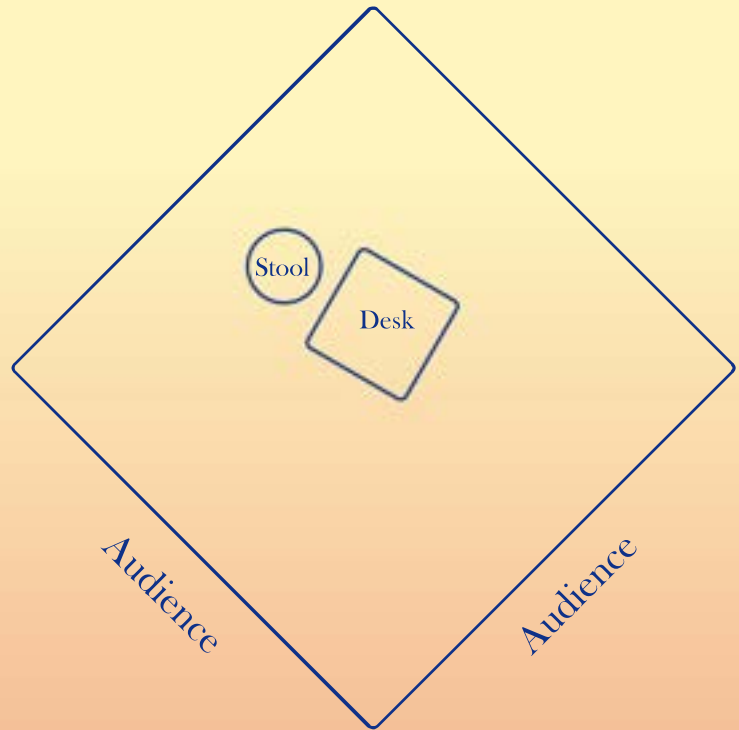
1x flower & vase

1x whiskey bottle

1x glass

1x notebook

(All provided by us)



## Lighting

A general wash is used throughout, with occasional moments of spotlight.

# Target Audience

Our original aim with *The Poetical Life of Philomena McGuinness* was to create a heartfelt and fun one-woman show for the Edinburgh Fringe that would appeal to an older audience and, furthermore, an audience that might not necessarily relate to the contemporary trend of *Fleabag*-style solo shows.

Motivated by our mutual interests of poetry and the stories of historic women, we read a number of archived stories from nurses, both British and Irish, from World War Two. Their charm, warmth and humour, as well as tragedy and fear, inspired this original play and the creation of *Philomena McGuinness*.



Through the process, we saw that the real-life element would appeal greatly to the older generation, but the powerful, relatable quality of fighting for your dreams during a global catastrophe and persevering through hopelessness and isolation also speaks strongly to the younger generation. Now, we have happily found that the show is a bridge between the old and young.

It is suitable for 12+ (some swearing and serious themes). Suitable for performances in schools, museums, care homes, small venues.

# Marketing

Company: Moon Rabbit  
Show Title: The Poetical Life of  
Philomena McGuinness  
Written by: Joshua King  
Performed by: Jasmin Gleeson

One Sentence Copy: The Poetical Life of Philomena McGuinness is a comedic and poignant one-woman play inspired by the true stories of Irish nurses during World War Two.

“If you leave this play feeling anything other than touched and inspired, then you are probably not breathing” \*\*\*\*\* Broadway-Baby

Age Suitability: 12+ (swearing and serious themes)

How will history remember you? As the person you are, or as the person you want to be?

The Poetical Life of Philomena McGuinness is a comedic and poignant one-woman play inspired by the true stories of Irish nurses during World War Two.

It's 1939 and Philomena McGuinness, a reluctant nurse, is on her way from Dublin to London. Newly recruited for the British war effort, she finds herself facing the challenge of a lifetime. But it is not the blood, the bombs, or even the wise-cracking soldiers that make her question her place here. It's the fact that she is not just a nurse, but a poet too. Can one live a life true to the poetry inside them when they are constantly being defined by their role in the war?

Written by Joshua King and performed by Jasmin Gleeson, The Poetical Life of Philomena McGuinness is brought to you by Moon Rabbit, an innovative theatre company enthusiastic about surprising stories of individuals throughout history.

Broadway Baby \*\*\*\*\* - ‘Any one person show relies heavily on the performance of the central cast member and the quality of the script, luckily The Poetical Life of Philomena McGuinness is blessed with excellent examples of both.’

‘If you leave this play feeling anything other than touched and inspired, then you are probably not breathing.’

The Wee Review \*\*\*\*\* - ‘Gleeson’s performance elevates from the captivating to the sublime.’

‘A deeply affecting performance, which does full justice to Joshua King’s masterpiece script.’

The Edinburgh Reporter \*\*\*\*\* - ‘This is a beautifully written and well-crafted story by Joshua King, performed brilliantly by actress and comedian Jasmin Gleeson.’

Moon Rabbit presents

the poetical life of  
**PHILOMENA  
McGUINNESS**

An Irish Nurse in World War II



BroadwayBaby



The Edinburgh  
Reporter



The Wee Review



# About Moon Rabbit

Moon Rabbit is an innovative, two-person theatre company enthusiastic about surprising stories of individuals throughout history. We love to tell real stories through a fictional lens, and get to grips with the personal narratives behind momentous historical events. Our work centres around character, first and foremost, and how they are moulded, affected, and perhaps unfairly defined by history. We love to do this through intimate staging and moments of audience interaction, with a heavy focus on script and character acting.



With *Philomena*, we have had multiple sell-out shows at the EdFringe and performed onboard Cunard cruises.

We are eager to take this story across the country and to share the tale of passion, perseverance and hope with old and young audiences alike.





Jasmin Gleeson is an Irish actress and comedian living in London. After training in Dublin for 3 years, she's worked consistently in theatre and as a stand-up comic. Her previous roles include Polly in *Between a Man and a Woman* (Etcetera Theatre London), Hayley/ Mum in *F\*cking Life Mate* (Bread and Roses, London), Nannie at the Cutty Sark Greenwich, Sister Evelyn Morgan at the National Army Museum Chelsea, Baron/Tumeric in *Improv Escape Room 'Hunt for the Smoking Caterpillar'* and more.

In 2022 she performed her first solo show *Razzmajazz* at the Edinburgh Fringe and can be seen regularly at the Comedy Store London, Top Secret Comedy Club, Backyard Comedy.

Other accolades include: Semi Finalist in Leicester Square New Comedian of the Year 2021 and Finalist in Stand up and Be Funny on The Ray Darcy Show RTE One.

She is the co-founder of Moon Rabbit Theatre.

Joshua King is a playwright, screenwriter and fiction writer living in London. He studied English Literature & Creative Writing at Royal Holloway University and an MFA in Creative Writing at New York's Adelphi University.

Joshua is the resident playwright for award-winning interactive theatre company *Say It Again, Sorry?* and historical one-person theatre makers Moon Rabbit. He has had many original plays performed in various venues, including: *The Gravediggers* (The Old Red Lion), *Jumper* (The Lion and Unicorn Theatre & The Bread & Roses Theatre) and *The Poetical Life of Philomena McGuinness* (Greenside, EdFringe 2022), which is soon to be performed aboard Cunard cruises.

As a screenwriter, Joshua has written for multiple children's TV shows, including *Popeye Island Adventures* and *The Teletubbies*. He has also had short stories published in a variety of places, including *The Year's Best Weird Fiction* anthology, and been nominated for the Shirley Jackson Award for short stories. He currently works as a freelance children's book ghost-writer.





# Reviews

“If you leave this play feeling anything other than touched and inspired, then you are probably not breathing.”

BroadwayBaby

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Edinburgh Reporter

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The Wee Review

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Images courtesy of Mann Bros Media



Images courtesy of Amandin Photography

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